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The concepts of peace and unity in the works of Mehmet Akif Ersoy

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Abstract

From the cradle of the humanity, unity and sympathy played vital role in keeping peace between nations. “Divide and conquer” politics widely practiced in Europe and Russia, made its great influence on the Ottoman Empire of XIX and XX ages. Mehmet Akif Ersoy believed that one and only way to keep the country in prosperity was unity. This idea was the essence of his life and all of his works. He strongly believed that nothing can lead to disturbances in country, if everyone in it is trying to establish it. Author of national anthem wasn't only focused on writing poems and articles; but also he preached the need in uniting on a single religion for the better future of the country. Unity of Muslims led to the establishment of great cultures. Disunion of which resulted in a loss of their lands and people. For the whole life Mehmet Akif followed these ideas, relying on Turkic-Islamic history and main principles of Islam religion, including Koran, which played significant role in the establishment of his personality

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1. Introduction

The concepts of peace and unity have been of the main importance in the human history. With the each stage of development of the human mind, the people had to be in close relationship to defend them from others or help each other, and this phenomenon has never changed. Because of their living together a lot of developed societies appeared. In this kind of society it was impossible to have such concepts as misunderstanding, disagreement and malice. Because, reaching up to great goals is not possible without people of this society being totally amicable.

There have to be social rules of human qualities in the world where other people's values are of the high importance. Even if people don't share the same religion, the same language and the lifestyle they have to find

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their common interests and on the base of them live in the unity. It is quite important for people of any society to use all of their power of will to be able to come to the point in the moments of disagreement. Especially when it comes to the economic, political and military power of the societies depend on the ability of internal functions to resist external factors. If it happens vice versa it is not surprising to them to disappear from the history stage as famous empires that have ruled for centuries did. (Yetis,1992)

The idea of peace and unity, discussed in the works of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, is represented as the right way for the nation to move forward. The reason of his words to be acceptable for people is in their spiritual support for them (Bolay,2008). For instance, in his poem “Adamzat” Mehmet Akif defines people’s place in the world. According to the author he who can enclose the whole world into his life cannot understand the importance of the human values that should be kept properly:

“You have no idea of yourself.
You say you are perfect, but you know,
That your life is even more important than angel’s is.
And you are those who enclosed the world into himself.
The creature made of sand and ray of sun of GOD,
Keep your pure heart full of shine.
Your being great by your CREATOR’s plans
Is not the end of your secrets” (Ersoy, 2003: 64)

In these lines we can clearly observe that his thoughts differ from the other naturalist, materialist and evolutionist views on the origin of the life. He thinks that human is not only a flesh and bone, but also developed creature in the spiritual sphere of life as well. As the result keeping material and spiritual values has to become the great aim of the humanity. If to discuss it widely, poet gives great importance to the idea that the spirit of the whole nation depends straightly on the life of each member of this society. It seems that his main aim was to “resuscitate the dead spirit” and put spirituality of the Turkish nation in contradiction with its material part. This contradiction made Turkish people to become closer to devotional life. So, the only weapon in the fight against malice was their hearts. In this turn Turkish nation got their victory and independency only with the help of their unity and peacefulness.

The concept of “Tauhid” that correlates with the idea of “Individuality and believing in the Allah’s being one” defines the human and his part in the world that surrounds him. So do the peacefulness and unity as the regulations to give the information of the other nationalities’ existence. Akif thinks that only after accepting some regulations found in the reciprocal lead people to achieve set goals, as human beings’ abilities are limited. Once in the mosque by Balykesir Zagnos Pasha, he mentioned that nothing can happen without a reason. Because of this the concept of peace and unity will never lose its importance despite the time. In his speech he said: *“Nowadays life’s and all human beings’ needs cannot be satisfied by one person only. All work can be done only when society and nation join together. None of the factories, railways, ships and ports, hospitals, mosques, schools and trade markets, none of the religion and country saving groups, tools and explosives can do nothing on their own. In a word, no one can reach their aim alone. The life nowadays goes in such a way, that even one person tears and sweat can’t make any change. If there is only a group of people working together, then they can achieve their aims.”* (Duzdag, 2004: 207)

Society that doesn’t keep their unity and peace loses their independence, and gets under the influence of other nations governing. That’s why Mehmet Akif wanted to discourage people from riot, strife and misunderstandings between each other. 19 November, 1920 in Kastamonu, Mehmed Akif’s historical words view of his evidence:

Any nation doesn’t bend their knees because of the defects of military weapons, aircrafts and necessary supplies. It happens only because of the spoilt relationship, when everyone thinks about themselves. If we hold the Islamic history in front of our eyes we will see that in the north, south, west and east a lot of powerful Muslim states, because of the damaged relationship, rebellion and strife lost their independence, and were taken by the

hand of other nations. Because of this we have forgotten our ancestors spilling blood, sacrificing their lives in order to save our contribution, inheritance. For example, if we avoided the enemy we could find a place that will become our prop or shelter.

“Open your eyes, wake up, more than this there are nothing to save, but our religion, belief, freedom, honor and even our children. If we believe in lies of our enemies and if we are in bad relationship with each other, God saves, one day Muslim states can be under the pressure of others.” (Sebilu’r-Resad, 1920)

There is an influence of Islamic canons which can be observed in Mehmet Akif’s ideas. The future poet didn’t become estranged from the Muslim community since his father Tahir, developed his religious literacy for the first time. The veterinarian was his main profession, that’s why he had been in different places of the country and it gave him an opportunity to get acquainted with spiritual world of his people. Akif taught Turkish to drivers, he also taught at agricultural institutions. Doing so, he started to understand the importance of being an educator. Those years seemed too difficult both for him and for his people. Akif, who never wanted to enter Turkish elite, understood that they wouldn’t work for the people. When different ideologies started to incept the nation, he also felt that it was necessary to create a program which will save the society from the elite. He thought that there should be done actions concerning Turkish lifestyle instead of behaving like western people. Independent anthem was very important for the poet who understood in the right way all this problems. According to this, whatever happens Turkish society will never give up their independence.

“From early times I have been living free.
Who can limit my freedom? I’m surprised!”(Ersoy, 2003: 161)

From Mehmet Akif’s point of view Islamic religion is a value which connects different nations of different origins and cultures. He thought about the importance of religious integrity, which should be the continuation of Ottoman Empire’s unity. “Share and Reign” policy of Europe and Russia played an important role in Ottoman Empire during the 19th and 20th centuries. Except this, at that time the main authority fell because of national motto and rebellions. Here, Akif is against to the idea that basis of the majority of nations is in its “national idea”. He had two reasons to be against the races: firstly, he didn’t think that this concept was appropriate to Muslim ideology. Secondly, the quality of this conception being political makes the Islam world become estranged. But Akif, knowing the reasons why the Ottoman Empire was falling apart, wanted to interfere with it. As Europe wanted to invade the country, they made the system go wrong.

Islam is near, close to you, you should adhere to it, I don’t understand you, and how could you think of falling apart? Had the devil deceived you? Despite various races, Islam refers to all of them, if the fundament falls, the nation gets lost. If this concept is forgotten, it means you have lost everything. Start developing yourself. Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria have fallen apart, here you see Iran falling apart.

Here, Mehmet Akif Ersoy indicates to the Muslims of Ottoman Empire government. Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt had become estranged from the Ottoman Empire. England and other Western countries knew about the petroleum in the East. The opponents tried to affect Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Albania to isolate from the Ottoman Empire. The fright of Western countries was against Turkey. Akif mentioned that if Ottoman Empire had succeeded in everything it would have been a great strength for Muslims. Because strong, independent Muslim country would make other Muslim countries have rights and reliance on them.

Muslim country sets other Muslim’s rights and supports them.

In the poems of Mehmet Akif, the concept of peacefulness and unity is represented in all sides. As the result it is necessary for governmental system and the nation’s elite to be integrated for the nation’s goals. He discusses a lot about religious sociologists’ common topic on “*unification of divine service and austerity*”. (Kylych, 2008). Akif believes that divine service is the main reason unification and supplement in the society. As the result people fall into devastation as they lose the atmosphere of divine service. While discussing people who came to that way poet turns his attention to the common parts of mind and mood:

“When verity is to lead you,
 Stop doing sins that embarrass you.
 Why they fight in the streets.
 I cannot understand what a Muslim it is?
 They are ready with knives when they see,
 And hide from the eyes when seen.
 Despite spirit shared between.” (Ersoy, 2003: 274)

Akif, didn't see religion as the lowest category of the culture. He claimed that religion as the part feeds the culture, and supports it. The quality of mercy, which has been one of the main cultural values of the Turkish nation, has spread widely under the influence of the religion.

“Pay attention to all that has been,
 Power and might that they had are with them.
 Only conditions make them small.
 They who are big are mightier.
 Now count one by one the mighty ones,
 And you'll see that mercy of this nation is the best one.
 And the waters of abundance never draughts” (Ersoy, 2003: 404)

Mehmet Akif defined Islam as the main factor of the unity and cohesion of the nation.

The wrong thoughts that caused struggle in the state on the spiritual and material level were never accepted by the majority of the society. Turkish society deep roots in the history and actions made by the enemy to dig it out are effortless.

“Not reading the words of ancestors you lead your nation to straw back,
 Pair of axes cannot dig out the root of our history,
 As the root is very deep,
 Wait and it will crash the barriers coming up,
 Those frontiers will cause thousands of draughts on the soil of our faith.
 So, don't be afraid, believe in virtue.
 As no one will estrange. (Ersoy, 2003: 404)

Mehmet Akif thought that the cohesion of faithful hearts will lead the nation to the victory as it did in Chanakkale.

“The hell that appeared in our life will be put out in our hearts,
 This is the way of verity; we won't retreat, only forward!
 We won't lose even a stone of honor,
 If the enemy will rain the weapons upon us,
 If the volcanoes blow up and covers the land with the red fire,
 Don't forget that we share one spirit in this war.
 These hearts beat together and won't be afraid!
 Even the world stops, this war will never end!” (Ersoy, 2003: 305-306)

2. Conclusion

As we can see Mehmet Akif wanted to use things that give value and the help to maintain the cohesion of religion and attitudes, goals and honor. Because, safety of unity and peace – beginning of the powerful force. He always gave great importance to the material and spiritual values and was honored for these thoughts. Turkish people who understood the value of the material and spiritual world agreed on the living on the basis of mutual peace and unity. In the years of national rebel poet whose poems were mainly about Independence took separate place in the Turkish history stage.

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